CONVERSATION AND DISCUSSION

BRINGING UP CHILDREN

**Topical Vocabulary**

1. **Basic principles:** to bring up (raise) children, to avoid pitfalls,  
   the formative years, to progress (regress) in one's development,  
   stunted development, physical and mental development, to en­  
   courage a child, to let children grow naturally, to treat children  
   like ..., to develop more quickly than previous generations, to gain  
   independence from parents, to grow up, to be mature, an effective  
   approach, a peaceful and relaxed manner.
2. **Basic qualities:** love, security, care, affection, respect, pa­  
   tience, reassurance, happy home backgrounds, responsible  
   adults, not to feel neglected, to be sensitive to one's feelings, to

be too wise to argue, to speak firmly, to be consistent, to be fair, to have no favourites, to show much patience (plenty of love).

1. **Handling children:** to have full faith in, to keep anger under  
   control, capacity to restrain anger, to cause enormous damage, not  
   to force one's will on a child, to avoid labelling children (stupid, sil­  
   ly, foolish), to listen to children with understanding and sympathy,  
   to win smb. over, to avoid statements (comments) which can create   
   arguments and tension, to shake smb.'s confidence, to offend  
   smb.'s self-respect, to prevent crises.
2. **Atmosphere:** friendly, not authoritarian, dignified, uncom­  
   fortable, embarrassing, an atmosphere of calm and quiet, to let  
   steam off, to put fat in the fire, to lose one's temper, not to create  
   tension (s), to be said in the heat of the moment.
3. Praise: direct praise of personality, realistic (idealized) pic­  
   ture of smb.'s personality, to exaggerate praise out of all propor­  
   tion, to give a realistic picture of a child's accomplishments, to  
   concentrate on a child's strength and not his weakness, to keep  
   away from general remarks about anyone's personality.
4. **Punishment:** to scream and yell at, not to hit children, to be  
   bound to lose, spanking, to cause mental illnesses (psychological  
   damage), to beat the daylights out of smb., to shake the life out of  
   smb., to be ashamed of oneself, the best way to criticize, to say  
   nothing, a direct reprimand, to answer back, a beating, to lock chil­  
   dren up, not to speak with a child deliberately, to ignore a child,  
   an undesirable form of punishment, sarcasm, to work out all sorts  
   of schemes for revenge, to tell smb. off (to give smb. a telling off).
5. **Discipline. Behaviour. Manner:** to discipline smb., a way of  
   teaching politeness, to be punctual, to interrupt a conversation, to  
   get quarrelsome, the art of living together, to lead to frayed nerves  
   for days on end, to develop a conscience in smb., not a word of  
   blame, not to impose anything on children, to encourage inner de­  
   velopment, to give children a choice, to heighten smb.'s self-confi­  
   dence, a beneficial and corrective influence on smb., to leave a de­  
   cision to the child, to teach smb. manners.
6. **Children's reaction:** to live up to smb.'s expectation, to do  
   smth. on purpose, to have admonitions and warnings, to be encour­  
   aged to ask questions, to be curious and inquisitive, to learn by im­  
   itation, to feel part of the family, to hate questions which try to  
   trap, to be pushed into making up lies, to choose between telling  
   a lie or giving embarrassing answers, to appreciate smth, to be­  
   come full of resentment, to become a nuisance (resentful, spirit­  
   less, delinquent).

1. Read the text for obtaining its information.

Parents are Too Permissive with Their Children Nowadays

Few people would defend the Victorian attitude to children, but if you were a parent in those days, at least you knew where you stood: children were to be seen and not heard. Freud and company did away with all that and parents have been bewildered ever since.

... The child's happiness is all-important, the psychologists say, but what about the parents' happiness? Parents suffer constantly from fear and guilt while their children gaily romp about pulling the place apart. A good old-fashioned spanking is out of the question: no modern child-rearing manual would permit such barbarity. The trouble is you are not allowed even to shout ... Certainly a child needs love ... and a lot of it. But the excessive permissiveness of modern parents is surely doing more harm than good.

Psychologists have succeeded in undermining parents' confi­dence in their own authority. And it hasn't taken children long to get wind of the fact. In addition to the great modern classics on child care, there are countless articles in magazines and newspapers. With so much unsolicited advice flying about, mum and dad just don't know what to do any more. In the end, they do nothing at all. So, from early childhood, the kids are in charge and parents' lives are regulated according to the needs of their offspring. When the little dears develop into teenagers, they take complete control. Lax authority over the years makes adolescent rebellion against parents all the more violent. If the young people are going to have a party, for instance, parents are asked to leave the house. Their presence merely spoils the fun. What else can the poor parents do but obey?

Children are hardy creatures (far hardier than the psychologists would have us believe) and most of them survive the harmful influ­ence of extreme permissiveness which is the normal condition in the modern household. But a great many do not. The spread of ju­venile delinquency in our own age is largely due to parental laxity. Mother, believing that little Johnny can look after himself, is not at home when he returns from school, so little Johnny roams the streets. The dividing line between permissiveness and sheer negli­gence is very fine indeed.

The psychologists have much to answer. They should keep their mouths shut and let parents get on with the job. And if children are knocked about a little bit in the process, it may not really matter too much ... Perhaps, there's some truth in the idea that children who've had a surfeit of happiness in their childhood emerge like stodgy puddings and fail to make a success of life.

2. Answer the following questions:

1. What are modern psychological ideas in the field of bringing up children? 2. Why do you think the author of the text rejects them? 3. The author regrets the fact that parents are not allowed "even to shout". Do you think that shouting can lead to understanding and is good when speaking with children? Would you say that anger does nothing but harm? Give reasons for your answer. 4. What's your attitude towards "good old-fashioned spanking" and physical punishment in general? Don't you regard it as the line of least resistance which is resorted to when a parent is just too exhausted to think of better ways if dealing with a child? 5. What is the result of the undermined parents' confidence in their own authority accor­ding to the author's point of view? 6. Do you think doing nothing with children is the best solution? 7. To what results can lax authority lead? 8. Do you think that children should always obey their pa­rents? What about parents obeying their children to make them hap­py? 9. Would you agree with the author that extreme permissiveness is harmful for children and can result in negative development? 10. Two extremes discussed in the text do not seem to produce good effect. What do you think is important in order to have normal relations between parents and children? Is tolerance necessary?

3. Find in the text the arguments the author gives to illustrate the following:

1. impossibility to defend Victorian attitude to children; 2. par­ents' sufferings due to undermined confidence in authority; 3. harmful effect of excessive parents' permissiveness; 4. parents' decision to regulate lives according to children's needs; 5. parental laxity— dividing line between permissiveness and negligence; 6. people to blame.

Try and preserve the wording of the original. Add your arguments as well.

1. Summarize the text in four paragraphs showing that love and care so im­  
   portant in the process of bringing up children is not the same as permissiveness  
   an^negligence.
2. Use the Topical Vocabulary in answering the questions:

,1. What is done in this country to make the child a responsible person? 2. What are the basic patterns of upbringing, both within the family and in collective situations? What roles do parents, school and age-segregated groups play in bringing up children? 4. What is the role of mother and father in a modern family? 5. Is a young mother more eager than previous generations to enroll her child in nursery? Why? 6. Do you consider grandparents and their influence important in the process of upbringing? 7. How does the regular school using the well-proven techniques of collective up­bringing care for the individual needs of a child? 8. What is more important in the process of upbringing school (teachers, collective) or home (parents) background? 9. What home atmosphere encour­ages a child's development? 10. What are the best ways, in your opinion, to praise and punish a child? 11. Do you think child-care books necessary for young parents? What else can be helpful?

6. What solution can you offer for the following problems?

1. "To the average child his parents are kill-joys. They are al­  
   ways saying "No". No getting dirty, no jumping on the sofa, no  
   running around naked, no hitting the little sister."
2. "Much more than a direct rebuke, sarcasm infuriates chil­  
   dren. It makes them completely irrational and they direct all their  
   energies to planning counter-attacks. They will be completely  
   preoccupied with revenge fantasies. Sarcasm not only serves to  
   deflate a child's standing in his own eyes but in the eyes of his  
   friends as well."
3. "I don't like James to play with Paul next door. Paul uses very  
   bad language, and James will pick it up. But Paul is James's best  
   friend and he sneaks out and sees him very often. So I lock him up  
   in the bathroom as a punishment. Sometimes I deliberately don't  
   speak to him for hours on end."

7. Read the following dialogue between Mrs. Brent and Mr. Alden, a teacher.  
The expressions in bold type show the WAYS ENGLISH PEOPLE COMPLAIN.  
Note them down. Be ready to act out the dialogue in class.

A: Would you like another cup of tea or something?

B: Well, no Thanks just the same.

A: I am **sorry to have to** say **this,** but what would our youngsters do without the youth centre? They'd be pretty lost, wouldn't they?

B: It's all right I suppose.

A: Er ... would you care to dance, Mrs. Brent?

B: Thank you ... but no. The music isn't of my generation. You know ... the generation gap. When I was young I'd never dared speak as our children do. Especially with a teacher present.

A: **We've got** a **bit of** a **problem here, you** see. It's part of my job to know people ... and especially young people ... as they are. And really the so-called generation gap is a myth you know. Teenagers aren't really so different. As a teacher I find them quite traditional in their attitudes.

B: **I'm sorry to disagree with you,** but look at the way they dress ... and their hair!

A: I don't think you get the point. Those things are quite superfi­cial. But basically their attitudes are very similar to those of our gen­eration.

B: There is **no** excuse for their language and you seem to ap­prove of the kind of language we hear from our children.

A: Now, I didn't say that. Anyway the concepts of "approval" and "disapproval" tend to over-simplify matters. Every generation creates its own special language just as it creates its own styles in clothes and music.

B: **I'd like to point out** that the styles and habits of today's teen­agers are so ... Well basically ... unacceptable.

A: You mean unacceptable to you. In fact their clothes are very practical and very simple.

B: I do wish you had a teenage son or daughter of your own, Mr. Alden.

A: But I have more contact with them. You see, we have regular discussions. You could come and sit in sometime if you like. And you'll realize I think how traditional their attitudes are.

8. Answer the following questions:

1. What do you think of the problem of the generation gap? 2. Do you agree with all that is said in the dialogue? With which statements do you disagree? (In answering this you may use the formulas of agreement and disagreement. See Appendix.) 3. What is Mrs. Brent complaining about? Are her complaints justified?

9. Work in pairs. Take turns to make complaints about the following and to  
respond appropriately. Use the expressions and cliches of complaint and  
apology:

**Expressions of complaint and apology:** A direct complaint in English sounds very rude indeed. To be polite one usually "breaks it gently" and uses expressions like these before one actually comes to the point: I wonder if you could help me... Look, I'm sorry to trouble you, but... I've got a bit of a problem here, you see ... I'm sorry to have to say this, but...

It is usually better to break it gently like this than to say, for ex­ample: "Look here! I wish you'd arrive on time or I've just about had enough of your unpunctuality (of your coming late)."

The following expressions can also be used:

I have a complaint to make.

It's just not good enough. You must try to ...

There's no excuse for doing it.

It's completely unjustified (unfair).

I'd like to point out that...

Next — and this is very serious — I feel that...

It gives us real cause for grievance.

Note: It is often not enough to just say "Sorry" and promise it won't happen again. You may need to apologize more profusely, like this:

Oh dear, I'm most awfully sorry. I can't tell you how sorry I am. I'm so sorry, I didn't realize. I just don't know what to say. I'm ever so sorry.

1. You find some pages torn out of a book. Complain to the li­brarian. 2. You have ordered the *TV Times* but you have been brought the *Radio Times.* Complain to the newsagent. 3. You have bought a colour TV set which is not correctly adjusted. Complain to the mechanic. 4. You can't sleep because of the noise made by people in the next door flat. Complain to the neighbour. 5. You booked a hotel room with a bath and have not been given it. Com­plain to the receptionist. 6. You don't know what to do about your pupils' discipline during your classes. Complain to the head teacher. 7. You can't make your child follow the doctor's orders and stay in bed. Complain to your mother. 8. You can't manage your children during bed-time. Complain to your husband. 9. Your child can't overcome his fear of animals. Complain to the doctor. 10. You think your 15-month-old child is backward (he's so very quiet, he hardly moves, he can barely walk). Complain to the psychologist.

10. Work in pairs.

One of the students is supposed to be an eminent educationist and child-psychologist. The other is to play the role of an affection­ate mother having a difficult teenage son who is always in a state of rebellion and resentment and regards his parents' anxiety over him as sheer interference. The psychologist should convince his visitor not to worry about her child and understand that his peculiar be­haviour is due to adolescence. Advise her also not to give sympa­thy and advice but to show an interest in the child.

11. Read the following text. You can find in it some ways of teaching children  
responsibility. In fact the main problem is whether to leave final decisions to  
children, without criticizing them. You can find some arguments for this view in